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Radios Wireless Electronics Support

Sangean's newest Radio, the WR-1.
RadioLabs: Wednesday, August 20, 2003
 by [Chris Justice](#)



Sangean, (wait, let me set the pronunciation correct for the first time...(San - G-N), is not exactly a household name. I don't know why, but, I suspect that nobody knows how to pronounce their name correctly so people simply don't say it. (See above for correct pronunciation) Well, you better sit up and take a look at what they are doing because they could possibly be the biggest radio manufacturer in the world. No kidding!

I feel privileged being one of the first people in the U.S. to not only get a thorough test drive of this radio, but, write the first review on the newest release from Sangean, the WR-1 wooden radio. In a nut-shell, the WR-1, Wooden Radio, is an eye-pleasing, small, hi-fi radio with tons of quality audio and simple functions. This radio will not be available until mid November so you are getting a first hand look at something completely new!

Receiver Shoot-out

There are a lot of contenders in the small, table-top, hi-fi market, with prices ranging from \$99 to \$499. You probably know the brand names of the competition and have most likely heard radio, or, seen print advertisements for these companies. This is a very competitive market and the competition is tough. Well, let me tell you, it's getting real tough with the release of Sangean's Wooden Radio. So, I decided to turn this little review into a simple table-top, hi-fi shoot-out.

Features:

The WR-1 is one of the simplest receivers to operate. Heck, there are only 3 controls on the front of the radio. Let me comment on the feel of the tuning knob first because no matter what radio you plan on purchasing, you always have to feel the tuning knob first. Two words, TIGHT and ACCURATE. There's nothing worse than an analog radio with a sloppy tuning knob. The volume control is crisp and has the correct resistance when turned. This is important because I also loathe a loose volume control. The band switch is simply an OFF/AM/FM rotary switch with a tight feel.

Audio quality:

All I can say is "Whoa!" Let me tell you first how I compared this radio to the competitors. Fortunately, I am one of those people that have access to all of the newest radios, literally all of them produced. I set these receivers up in a quiet room, side-by-side and tested them on the same frequency. For legal reasons I am concealing the names behind the radio manufacturers I tested these against but I will give small hints as to which they were? There were three radios which we tested against the WR-1. The radio that starts with a "B" and rhymes with "hose" another radio which is named after the Capital of Massachusetts and another small wooden radio that starts with a "T" and I can't

WR-1 Wood Radio Review

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think of anything that rhymes with it. It sounds like an Italian name however. (maybe Stromboli).

We tested these radios on all different types of music including classic rock, classical, reggae, rap (I know, just had to do it) and country (personally I think rap was better) and tested them in the following categories:



Audio fidelity: We rated the response on FM music as well as AM voice quality.

Bass Response: Bass response without distortion.

Treble: None of these receivers has a bass or treble adjustment so we simply rated their preset audio quality.

FM Reception – All receivers with built-in antennas.

AM Reception – Same thing. Built-in antenna only.

External connections – Any of those funky looking things on the back of the radios with the weird threads, screws or jacks. You know, the same thing you plugged the wrong connection into when you were a kid and blew-up dad's stereo.

The side by side audio comparison. – Music. Good, loud music. That's all I wanted to listen to on this radio was good music. I compared it at same volume level to the other radios in the group and to my total (yes, I mean total surprise) the "B" radio was the first one to be turned off. Next was the "Italian" named wooden radio. It just couldn't keep up in either FM audio fidelity or bass response. Next, it came down to the Massachusetts brand radio and the Sangean WR-1. Honestly, the "Massachusetts" brand radio had slightly (and I mean very very slightly) better fidelity. However, the Sangean WR-1 had slightly better bass response. So, all in all I would call it a dead even tie for audio quality between these two receivers. Both of them had audio that was alive, full and very rich for such a small radio. It's probably because of the 1" bass port located on the back of the radio. With the volume up, quite a bit of air moves through that little port!

You just can't beat a wooden cabinet when it comes to audio quality! Plastic cabinets react differently to bass response and are not as efficient because they are not solid like wood. Plastic expands slightly from increasing sound pressure levels due to the expanding air pressure. Wood is a much more dense material and therefore does not expand.... This equals mega-bass response and greater mid-frequency audio response. Oh, and if you are not technical, this means that a wood cabinet and seven watts of tailored audio will sound bitchin' on rap music!

AM reception: Well, between all of the radios tested, the WR-1 was the hands down winner. All of the other receivers tested seemed to be quite deaf when it came to AM reception. It's probably because the WR-1 has a 4-1/2" ferrite rod antenna that is 1/2" diameter. I tested all of the radios on several local AM stations and the WR-1 had noticeably better reception. One thing to note however. The WR-1's AM antenna is located from front to back inside of the radio. When you "point" the directional ferrite at a station you actually have to point the side of the radio towards the station. A little different when you are used to operating a portable radio and the ferrite runs parallel across the back. AM audio quality was very good and reproduced the human voice great!

The main competition of the new Sangean WR-1 is the "Capital of Massachusetts" brand radio. But, since they are not really in the same league because The WR-1 is priced at an

amazing \$119 retail, it is simply a matter of personal choice if you would like to spend more money on a radio with a couple more bells and whistles. I like analog tuning and this would be my personal choice.

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External connections: The WR-1 has external antenna jacks on the back for power, headphone connection, line output, line input (yes, it sounds excellent with a CD player connected), external AM and FM antenna connections. It also comes with a small wire FM antenna, which you plug in the back of the radio for improved FM sensitivity.

Yeah yeah, I know. I am a highly touted engineer making this review and have developed a lot of radios and products with Sangean in the past. I know the company very well and am personal friends with the engineer that developed the WR-1. Please, don't let that influence this review because it was honest and from the eardrums. Besides, have you ever actually seen me do a review on any other radio before? Of course not. They simply didn't sound like the WR-1 and couldn't have affected me in the same way.



UPDATE: November 21st, The color of the WR-1 is available only in Black/Platinum as can be seen in this recent photo. Very nice, very classic look.

In conclusion and probably as you can tell, the new Sangean WR-1 receiver is everything I like and want in a small, Hi-Fi radio. It is perfect for your kitchen, an end table, counter top, or even a bedroom radio. The lack of a clock is unfortunate so it cannot wake me up in the morning, but that's not what this radio is about. It's simple, easy to use and just generally makes your ears feel good. I would be very happy to own this radio, especially at the low price of \$119 US retail. I will be comparing the sound of this radio to just about everything I twist a knob on for a long time to come.

Until next time! Happy listening..... Chris

WR-1 Wood Radio Review

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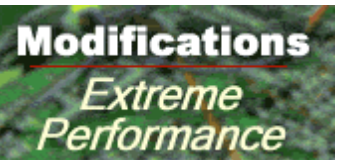
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WOODEN CABINET RADIO RECEIVER
WR-1 AM/FM 2 BANDS
 (OPTIONAL LW BAND FOR UK VERSION)

- Wooden cabinet made of MDF in real Cherry or Walnut or other optional wood veneer
- Soft and Precision tuning

- Rotary tuning and volume controls
- Tuning LED indicator
- Band indicator
- Detachable Power cord
- Headphone socket
- REC out
- Aux in socket to connect with other audio source (e.g. CD player)
- 3 inches 7 W full range speaker wqith enlarged magnet
- Dynamic Bass Compensation for rich bass
- External AM antenna terminal
- Internal/External FM antenna switch
- 9-14 Voltage power adaptor socket for vehicle power
- WxHxD in mm: 240x115x153
- Weight: 2356g

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